WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method comprising:

    (a)   automatically and repeatedly collecting data indicative of an operating state of a machine, and

    (b)   automatically transmitting information related to the collected data to a location remote from the computer in the form of electronic mail messages complying with a standard electronic mail messaging protocol.

2. The method of claim 1 also including:

    (a)   receiving the electronic mail messages at computer, and

    (b)   analyzing the information at the computer to derive performance measures.

3. The method of claim 2 also including

    (a)   generating a report embodying the performance measures, and

    (b)   making the report available electronically.

4. The method of claim 3 in which

    (a)   the report comprises a natural language document expressed in a natural language format.

5. The method of claim 3 in which the report is made available on a web site.

6. The method of claim 1 in which the machine comprises a network server, desktop computer, or an intelligent appliance.

7. The method of claim 1, in which the standard electronic mail messaging protocol comprises a Simple Mail Transfer Protocol.

8. The method of claim 1, in which the collected data includes a time-ordered sequence of performance measurements taken at fixed time intervals.

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1　9. The method of claim 1, in which the collected data includes measurements of at least one
2　　 of CPU usage, process queue length, memory usage, memory paging rate, disk usage,
3　　 network usage, paging space occupancy, file system occupancy, and process resource
4　　 usage.

1　10. The method of claim 1, in which the information related to the collected data is
2　　 compressed and encrypted for inclusion in the electronic mail message.

1　11. The method of claim 1, in which the collected data is collected from at least one of: a
2　　 registry, a system call, a virtual file system, a virtual device, and an input/output control
3　　 call to a device.

1　12. An article comprising a machine readable medium on which are tangibly stored machine-
2　　 executable instructions for monitoring a machine, the instructions being operable to cause
3　　 a machine to:

4　　 (a)　automatically and repeatedly collect data indicative of an operating state of the
5　　　　　machine, and

6　　 (b)　automatically transmit information related to the collected data to a location remote
7　　　　　from the machine in the form of electronic mail messages complying with a
8　　　　　standard electronic mail messaging protocol.

1　13. The computer program product of claim 12 in which the computer comprises a network
2　　 server.

1　14. The article of claim 12, in which the standard electronic mail messaging protocol
2　　 comprises a Simple Mail Transfer Protocol.

1　15. The article of claim 12, in which the collected data includes a time-ordered sequence of
2　　 performance measurements taken at fixed time intervals.

1　16. The article of claim 12, in which the collected data includes measurements of at least one
2　　 of CPU usage, process queue length, memory usage, memory paging rate, disk usage,

3   network usage, paging space occupancy, file system occupancy, and process resource

4   usage.

1   17. The article of claim 12, in which the information related to the collected data is

2   compressed and encrypted for inclusion in the electronic mail message.

1   18. The article of claim 12, in which the collected data is collected from at least one of: a

2   registry, a system call, a virtual file system, a virtual device, and an input/output control

3   call to a device.

1   19. A method comprising

2   (a)   automatically and repeatedly receiving electronic mail messages that include

3   information related to remotely collected data indicative of a performance of a

4   machine, the electronic mail messages complying with a standard electronic mail

5   messaging protocol, and

6   (b)   automatically analyzing the information to determine the performance of the

7   machine.

1   20. The method of claim 19 further comprising:

2   (a)   extracting the information from the electronic mail messages.

1   21. The method of claim 20 further comprising generating a natural language report based on

2   the analysis.

1   22. The method of claim 19, further comprising:

2   generating an electronic mail message that includes the report; and

3   transmitting the electronic mail message over a network.

1   23. The method of claim 19, wherein the collected data includes at least one time ordered

2   sequence of performance measurements and wherein:

3   analyzing the collected data includes comparing at least some of the collected data

4   with a corresponding threshold value to determine whether the performance

5   measurements are within a range of acceptable values.

1   24. The method of claim 23, wherein generating the performance report includes:

2   selecting an information item based on the comparison of the performance

3   measurement; and

4   adding the selected information item to the performance report.

1   25. The method of claim 23 wherein:

2   analyzing the collected data includes determining the number of performance

3   measurements that are within the range of acceptable values; and

4   selecting the information item is further based on the number of performance

5   measurements that are within the range of acceptable values.

1   26. The method of claim 23 wherein the item of information includes a natural language

2   sentence.

1   27. The method of claim 26 wherein the item of information includes at least one of a

2   measurement value or the threshold value.

1   28. The method of claim 26 wherein at least part of the natural language sentence is

2   enhanced to draw attention to the sentence.

1   29. The method of claim 28 wherein the part of the natural language sentence is enhanced by

2   at least one of bold typeface, italicized typeface, colored typeface, underlining, and a

3   different font size.

1   30. The method of claim 23 wherein the item of information includes a graphical display.

1   31. The method of claim 26 wherein at least part of the natural language sentence is a

2   hyperlink to more detailed information about a section of the sequence of performance

3   measurements.

1   32. An article comprising a machine readable medium on which are tangibly stored machine-

2   executable instructions for monitoring a remote machine, the instructions being operable

3   to cause a machine to:

4   (a)   automatically and repeatedly receive electronic mail messages that include

5   information related to remotely collected data indicative of a performance of the

6   remote machine, the electronic mail messages complying with a standard electronic

7   mail messaging protocol, and

8   (b)   automatically analyze the information to determine the performance of the remote

9   machine.

1   33. The article of claim 32, wherein the instructions further cause the processor to:

2   (a)   extract the information from the electronic mail messages.

1   34. The article of claim 33 wherein the instructions further cause the processor to generate a

2   natural language report based on the analysis.

1   35. The article of claim 32, wherein the instructions further cause the processor to:

2   generate an electronic mail message that includes the report; and

3   transmit the electronic mail message over a network.

1   36. The article of claim 32, wherein the collected data includes at least one time ordered

2   sequence of performance measurements and wherein:

3   analyzing the collected data includes comparing at least some of the performance

4   measurements with a corresponding threshold value to determine whether the

5   performance measurements are within a range of acceptable values.

1   37. The article of claim 36, wherein generating the performance report includes:

2   selecting an information item based on the comparison of the performance

3   measurement; and

4   adding the selected information item to the performance report.

1   38. The article of claim 36 wherein:

2   analyzing the collected data includes determining the number of performance

3   measurements that are within the range of acceptable values; and

4   selecting the information item is further based on the number of performance

5   measurements that are within the range of acceptable values.

1   39. The article of claim 36 wherein the item of information includes a natural language
2   sentence.

1   40. The article of claim 39 wherein the item of information includes at least one of a
2   measurement value or the threshold value.

1   41. The article of claim 39 wherein at least part of the natural language sentence is enhanced
2   to draw attention to the sentence.

1   42. The article of claim 41 wherein the part of the natural language sentence is enhanced by
2   at least one of bold typeface, italicized typeface, colored typeface, underlining, and a
3   different font size.

1   43. The article of claim 36 wherein the item of information includes a graphical display.

1   44. The article of claim 39 wherein at least part of the natural language sentence is a
2   hyperlink to more detailed information about a section of the sequence of performance
3   measurements.

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